

Dateline DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Sabatini Named DHMH Secretary

Welcome back to Nelson J. Sabatini, who is once again DHMH Secretary!



Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. has appointed Mr. Sabatini to the position he held from 1991-1995. He will implement the Governor's commitment to restore health care as a top priority and make improvements that will benefit citizens throughout the state.

"As a longtime proponent of effective health care delivery, I want capable and compassionate professionals leading Maryland's health care system. Nelson Sabatini is known throughout Maryland as a proven administrator who understands our state's health care needs," Governor Ehrlich said.

"I am pleased to accept Governor Ehrlich's appointment," Sabatini said. "Maryland possesses an outstanding health care system, but still faces challenges. Resources are scarce and demand for services is increasing. I look forward to working with Governor Ehrlich, the legislature and the Department to maximize our ability to meet the health care needs of Maryland's citizens."

Sabatini, who began his new position on March 10, most recently was Executive Vice President of the University of Maryland Medical System. After leaving state government in 1995, he became Vice President of Integrated Delivery System Operations for the University of Maryland Medical System. He was promoted to the Senior Vice President of Delivery Systems and Network Development in 1998, and in 1999 to his most recent position, Executive Vice President for Community Hospital Integration and Network Development.

Sabatini also served as the DHMH Deputy Secretary

for Health Care Policy, Finance and Regulation from 1988 to 1991, and held various positions in the Social Security Administration and the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Sabatini earned a B.A. degree from Lewis College in Illinois. He has received numerous awards from civic and community organizations and serves on the boards of Kernan Hospital, University Specialty Hospital, Baltimore Goodwill Industries, House with a Heart, and the Italian American Chamber of Commerce. He is the father of two and lives with his wife, Marilyn, in Severna Park.

Maryland Vaccinates More Than 200 For Smallpox

By mid-March over 200 Maryland health care workers have been vaccinated for smallpox since the program's onset in late February, according to the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH).

Of these vaccinated individuals, there have been reports of a variety of expected reactions including fever, headache, swelling near the vaccination site, severe itchiness and skin rashes.

One case, reported as an adverse reaction, involved a non-specific rash that appeared on the person's chest, back and neck. The patient has recovered. The non-specific rash is a known side effect that some individuals will experience after being vaccinated. This rash is not contagious and poses no risk to others.

In preparing for the smallpox vaccination program, Maryland and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) established a system to carefully monitor the health status of vaccinated individuals to ensure that immediate and comprehensive evaluations are provided if reactions appear serious.

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Maryland Vaccinates

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"The smallpox vaccination effort in Maryland is going very well at this early stage and we are confident that our careful planning, preparation and monitoring will pay off in making this one of the nation's most successful programs," said Nelson J. Sabatini, DHMH Secretary.

Maryland has been recognized as the only state that has every health department and every acute care hospital participating in the vaccination program.

CDC criteria for adverse events includes common and relatively minor reactions to smallpox vaccine as well as more serious events including hospitalization, permanent disability, life threatening illness or the death of any individual who receives the vaccine.

Maryland's initial shipment of approximately 6,000 doses of the smallpox vaccine from CDC is being provided to pre-designated volunteer public health and health care workers as part of the state's continuing emergency preparedness effort.

Smallpox information is available from the Maryland DHMH Public Health Hot Topics telephone line, by calling 1-866-866-2769.

The following Web sites also provide useful information:

The Maryland Department of
Health and Mental Hygiene
www.dhmh.state.md.us

The Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/smallpox

Strive for 9 A Day?

Most of us have heard about the **5 A Day Program**, which encourages us to consume five servings of fruits and vegetables every day.

Well, what about **9 A Day**?

As part of the effort to get Marylanders to eat more fruits and vegetables, a 9 A Day campaign was kicked off on the Urban Advantage Network, including Radio One stations in Baltimore and Washington D.C. It is designed to promote good health and reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as hypertension, heart disease and diabetes by encouraging African-American men to eat nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

"High blood pressure affects one in every three African-American men," says Kevin Hatcher of the DHMH Office of Chronic Disease Prevention's Division of Cardiovascular Health. "Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables helps prevent and control high blood pressure because fruits and vegetables contain powerful nutrients that protect health."

When the 5-A-Day program was launched in 1991, the recommendation was "Eat 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables every day." Emphasis was placed on the 5 A Day message to get the public started on the path to increasing fruit and vegetable intake. The 9 A Day message is a logical extension of the program.

The 5 to 9 message covers the range of servings recommended for American men, women and children. And, the latest version of the 5 A Day campaign logo includes a "5 to 9 servings" message more prominently.

The campaign to reach African-American men includes a media tour for basketball star Clyde Drexler begun during last month's college basketball national championships, and promotional activities for the 2003 college and pro football season, including tips for foods served at tailgate parties and other football gatherings.

Listen for the campaign messages on WOLB-AM, WWIN-AM and WWIN-FM in Baltimore and WKYS-FM, WMMJ-FM, WYCB-AM and WOL-AM in D.C. To find out what 9 A Day looks like as part of a healthy diet, request a copy of the 9 A Day campaign brochure by e-mail from goodheart@dhmh.state.md.us.

For the record, less than a third of Marylanders report eating five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, although the proportion of those who do increased from 24.7 percent in 1996 to 27.4 percent in 2000, according to Maryland's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

Editor's Note: Thanks to the staff in the Family Health Administration's Division of Cardiovascular Health and Nutrition for writing this article.



Seven ninth grade students from the Baltimore County Academy of Finance visited DHMH in



February to 'shadow' DHMH employees. Here, Michael Aversa works with three of the students (clockwise from right) Tavon Foster, Erika Durbin and Amanda Ornstein. Other DHMH mentors were Tony Aversa, Allan Dale 3rd, Hank Fitzner, Alfred FitzSimons, Michele McDonald, Kyle McNair, Bill Miller, and Audrey Richardson.

Calendar of Events

Thursday, April 24 — **Workshop: Effective Mid-level Management in the Human Services;** University of Maryland School of Social Work; 8:30 a.m. - 4:15 p.m. \$120, approved for Category I continuing education credits. Phone 410-706-1839 for more information.

Tuesday, April 29 — **Governor's 10th Annual Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect;** Baltimore Convention Center; 9:00 a.m. - 4:45 p.m. Sponsored by the Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families; \$100. More information is available on the Internet at www.ocyf.state.md.us (click on 'latest news,' then click on 'upcoming events - conference.')

Wednesday, April 30 — **Workshop: Critical Issues in Adolescent Substance Abuse: When an Immovable Object Meets an Irresistible Force;** University of Maryland School of Social Work; 8:30 a.m. - 4:15 p.m. \$120, approved for Category I continuing education credits. Phone 410-706-1839 for more information.

Saturday, May 3 — **Health Freedom Walk: A Path to Wellness;** St. Mary's Park (Druid Hill Avenue and Paca Street), Baltimore; \$10.00. Registration 7:30 a.m., Walk begins at 9:00 a.m. Sponsored by the Community Health and Awareness Monitoring Program (C.H.A.M.P.), this 6-K walk makes creative use of Baltimore's integral role in the Underground Railroad and will honor those who walked for freedom and those who assisted in the struggle.

Public Health Week

'Getting in Shape for the Future: Healthy Eating for Active People' is the theme for this year's observance of National Public Health Week, which is being celebrated from April 7 through 13.

At least five Maryland local health departments have activities planned in advance of or during the week.

Baltimore County will have banners posted at each of its community health centers. In addition, a mini health fair featuring health information and screenings will be held on Thursday, April 3. Employee of the Year awards will be presented at an employee appreciation breakfast that day. Please contact Karen Stott at 410-887-6092 for more information.

Caroline County will have information tables on display in the health department lobby for the public and employees. More information is available by contacting Laura Patrick at 410-479-8080.

During Public Health Week, **Charles County** will promote the county's Smoke-Free Campus Policy that takes effect on May 1. Phone Laura Hillier at 301-609-6930 for more information.

St. Mary's County is holding a public forum, 'A Common Sense Approach to Public Health Emergencies,' on Wednesday, April 9 beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Governmental Center building in Leonardtown. The health department will also hold its celebration of staff achievements on Monday, April 7, when the Employee of the Year will be named. Phone Mary Novotny at 301-475-4318 for more information.

Wicomico County will select a winner from nominations for the 2003 Wicomico County Outstanding Public Health Leader during a ceremony on Tuesday, April 1 from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. at the William C. Fritz Health Center in Salisbury. Also, Salisbury and Wicomico County have locally proclaimed the week of March 31 - April 6 as Public Health Week. Call Sally Walling or Cathey Insley at 410-334-3480 for more information.

If your county is not listed, please give your local health department a call to see if any activities are planned.

Alcohol: Good for your heart, or not?

To drink or not to drink? With new research constantly replacing old facts, it's hard to know the difference between healthy and harmful, and alcoholic beverages are a perfect example.

While alcoholism can have serious health consequences, recent studies show that 'moderate' drinking actually has health benefits for many people.

Sound confusing? Fortunately, a few basic guidelines can help separate facts from hype.

Forty-four percent of the adult U.S. population age 18 and over are current drinkers who have consumed at least 12 drinks in the past year. For most people who drink, alcohol is a pleasant accompaniment to social activities. Nonetheless, a large number of people risk serious health problems due to their drinking. Currently, nearly 14 million Americans — 1 in every 13 adults — abuse alcohol or are alcoholic.

The health consequences of alcohol misuse are serious. Heavy drinking can increase the risk for certain cancers, especially those of the liver, esophagus, throat, and larynx (voice box). It can also cause liver cirrhosis, immune system problems, brain damage, and harm to a fetus during pregnancy.

However, in the past two decades, studies have shown that moderate drinking is associated with a lower risk for coronary heart disease (CHD) and stroke, two of the leading causes of death in the U.S. for both men and women.



*This year's **Black History Month** celebration focused on entertaining area school children, and some pitched in to do the entertaining. Members of the Winston Middle School Jazz Band (left) provided music, while students from the Samuel Coleridge Taylor Elementary School (right) demonstrated African dances.*

While scientists aren't entirely sure just how alcohol lowers the risk of heart disease, it appears to have a blood-thinning, anti-clotting effect similar to aspirin.

But before you grab a cold beer or pour a glass of wine, drink in this important fact: the same research also found that heavy drinkers actually increase their risk of stroke by more than 60 percent, canceling out the health benefits of lesser amounts of alcohol.

Therefore, moderation is the key to enjoying the health benefits of alcohol while avoiding the risks.

The medical community defines moderate as up to two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women. A standard drink is one 12-ounce bottle or can of either beer or wine cooler, one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.

While researchers continue to study the potential health benefits from moderate drinking, don't rely on alcohol to improve your health. If you don't drink, don't start drinking just for the health benefits. Instead, rely on the tried-and-true medical advice to reduce your risk of heart disease and

stroke: quit smoking, lower your cholesterol, exercise moderately and eat a healthy diet.

***Editor's Note:** Thanks to Tara Snyder, Community Health Educator in the Center of Health Promotion, Education and Tobacco Prevention, for writing this article.*



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